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ABSTRACT

In fall 1981, three Teacher Corps interns worked with high school students to improve their abilities in content area reading. The interns worked directly with content area teachers and their students on a tutorial basis, each intern assuming responsibility for an identified content area--social studies, mathematics, and English. The interns made bulletin boards, participated in meetings with school staff, prepared news releases, made a presentation to the School Board, and conducted research. They also constructed instructional materials (learning center and skill development guides), participated in district and county school inservice programs, and worked with parents/citizen volunteer groups. They participated in school activities, acted as resource guests in some classrooms, and conducted some classes on their own. Interns submitted brief essays identifying their principal contributions to the high school, the most important "lesson" learned from the intervention experience, and some modifications which might be made if the intervention were repeated. Review of the intervention and assessment findings indicate that the high school reading teacher might work directly with content area teachers to model teaching behaviors, provide consultant assistance, and develop and disseminate instructional materials. It was also indicated that establishing a system of peer tutoring could be valuable. Attachments present information on a summary of student and teacher feedback, and comments from the interns. (JD)

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Teacher Corps * Program '79
The University of Toledo/
Springfield Local Schools

Teaching Reading in the Content Areas:

SUMMARY AND ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT INTERVENTION AT SPRINGFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

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During the fall, 1981, Project Interns Lynn Haffey, Denise Lemerand and Aurelio Sanchez, Jr. initiated project intervention activities at Springfield High School. Beginning August 31st, the interns conducted a series of meetings with High School principal, Donald C. Prentiss, and several teachers--including Ms. Betley, Bowers, Corcoran-Smith, Daniels and Enright and Messrs. Maney and VanDriesen. The interns carried out initial plans to observe selected classes and develop sensitivity for the High School climate, to solicit and examine input for designing an appropriate intervention strategy and identifing appropriate activities, and to clarify responsibilities with respect to a planned district-wide Community School Visitation and related High School initiatives.* Project Director Joan Inglis, On-Site Coordinator and Intern Team Leader Ralph Carroll, and Community Council Chair Paul Laffartha and Vice-Chair Ralph Borror also participated in the initial intern planning meetings.

Project Intervention

Several elements constituted important context for intern intervention at the High School:

1. Prior agreement between the High School and the Project had been reached focusing intern initiated project intervention on "Reading in the Content Areas."

2. Mr. Prentiss and his staff had adopted a 1981-82 school year theme "Education is a Family Affair," and via a Project-supported university-credit Workshop, in part, had identified, designed and begun to implement a number of school-community activities.

3. The Project had previously conducted a number of school staff development activities related both to the teaching of reading and to improving school climate, as follows:

   A. Reading in the Content Areas.

      1. University course, "Reading in the Content Areas," Fall, 1980.

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*For a detailed accounting of day-to-day intern activities throughout the fall, see "Intern Log," September through December, 1981, issues available at the Project offices.

2. Secondary Reading Curriculum Development Committee, Winter-Spring, 1981.
3. Secondary Schools workshop, "Reading in the Content Areas," Fall, 1981.

B. Improving School Climate.

1. Ohio Teacher Institute, "School Climate and Teacher Stress," Summer-Fall, 1980.
2. High School workshop, "Student Attitudes and Motivation," Fall, 1980.
3. University course, "Secondary School Instructional Strategies," Spring, 1981.
4. University course ("Summer Workshop"), "Individualizing Schooling for Children and Youth," Summer-Fall, 1981.

Intervention Goal and Strategy

It was decided that the interns would complement other High School efforts to improve reading in the content areas. It was intended initially, then, that the interns work with one teacher in an identified subject area, provide modeling behaviors for High School staff in all content areas, and increase student price and reading skill development. This was to be accomplished via a classroom assistance and tutorial arrangement which allowed interns time for working with students and for developing additional resources for teachers.* The strategy also provided time for intern involvement in school climate/school-community activities. Intern involvement in the latter activities facilitated their implementation and it enhanced intern-High School and intern-community relationships which, in turn, further facilitated intervention strategy effectiveness.

Initially, the interns worked exclusively with the High School Reading teacher, Mrs. Mary Betley. Each week, on a rotating basis, one intern worked with Mrs. Betley in her classroom while the others worked one-on-one with identified students in a tutorial setting. A small classroom annex was eventually

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*Each intern also agreed to work with an identified district school staff (in addition to the High School) in preparation for the November 17th Community School Visitation day.

provided for the latter activity. In late September, Mrs. Judy Koroloff, a University of Toledo graduate education student, was assigned to work with the interns to facilitate day-to-day activities and to provide liaison between the interns and other Project Staff.

Also in late September, other High School teachers began initiating inquiries which resulted in some of their students' being referred for intern tutorial assistance with reading and related study skills. Subject content areas included mathematics, social studies, and English, and teacher participants were Ms. Beekley, Enright and Furrow and Messrs. Fox, Maney, McQuade and Pease. In all, about thirty High School students received tutoring assistance from the interns.

Modification of Strategy

Following some formative assessment of the intervention strategy, it was decided that the interns would work directly with content area teachers and their students. This was done on a tutorial basis exclusively, each intern assuming responsibility in an identified content area: Mr. Sanchez in social studies, Miss Lemerand in mathematics, Miss Haffey in English. A schedule of daily tutorial assignments also allowed interns continued involvement in other identified activities.

The interns made bulletin boards and participated in meetings with the Community Council and with the respective school staffs. They prepared news releases, made a presentation to the School Board, and conducted research. They also constructed instructional materials (e.g., learning centers, skill development guides, and the like), participated in district and County School Office inservice, and worked with parent/citizen volunteer groups. The interns participated in High School pep rallies and related activities, acted as resource guests in some classrooms, and conducted some classes on their own.

hey also accompanied students and teachers on selected field trips.

The interns completed their work at Springfield High School on December 4, 1981.

Feedback and Assessment

On November 24th, the interns and Mrs. Koroloff met with the Evaluation Consultant to discuss the High School intervention and to design appropriate assessment devices. It was decided that written feedback via questionnaires would be solicited from the High School students who had received intern tutoring, from the several teachers with whose students the interns had worked during the fall, and from the interns themselves. A telephone interview with Mr. Prentiss was conducted, and Mrs koroloff submitted a written review of intern activities.

Findings. Conversations with School and Project officials revealed a high level of satisfaction with the project intervention and with the interns and the activities they conducted. In particular, Mr. Prentiss expressed appreciation on behalf of the students who received the "extra" assistance via the tutoring activity.

Questionnaires were completed and returned by twenty-eight students and six teachers, and each intern submitted a brief written statement. Tables 1, 2 and 3 (attached) display results of data compilation.

In general, students responded positively to the interns, the tutoring and the individual attention they received. Students were most positive (79-96%) about the level of difficulty of the tutorial work ("...made me think" and "assignments...were very helpful"), the opportunity for "extra help," and the ease they felt in asking a tutor's help ("...very easy" and "liked working with my tutor a lot"). They were least positive ("...a little" to "very interesting") (50%) about the interest level of the work required and about

the responsiveness of their peers to the tutors. With respect to the latter response, it is interesting to note that, while students gave very positive feedback to the adults involved, they were obviously more cautious in their responses with one another.

Teachers who provided feedback were positive in all their responses. They were unanimously positive about the variety of activities interns provided their students, about the level of communication they felt possible with the interns ("...made him/herself available... frequently"), and about continuing a tutoring program after the interns' departure. They were very positive (83%) about the extra assistance interns provided them, about the appropriateness and challenging nature of tutorial activities and assignments, about the interns' organization and follow-through, and about student response and improvement. Teachers' additional comments coincide with these observations.

Each of the interns submitted a brief essay identifying their principal contributions to the High School, the most important "lessons" learned from the intervention experience, and some modifications which might be made were the intervention to be repeated. Their respective observations have been included in Table 3.

The interns were consistent in identifying one contribution, namely, providing some special positive support for the small group of students involved. Interns reported a limited intervention impact, perhaps overlooking the "ripple effect" characteristic of most such activities. The interns noted, in particular, two special characteristics of the High School among their "lessons learned." First, they noted that the High School in a considerably more complex organization than are the elementary schools and, thus, fragmented in points-of-view, sociogrammatic patterns among students and staff, and institutional objectives. Secondly, they underscored the importance of student attitudes and motivation for effective schooling. Modifications in the intervention strategy

suggested by the interns included more specific attention to student motivation, greater participation by students and staff, and improved communication efforts on all sides.

Conclusion. Project intervention at Springfield High School to facilitate more effective teaching of reading in the content areas was successful with respect to the cadre of students and teachers with whom the interns had direct contact. Intern activities at Springfield High School also reinforced an improving school climate. Greater impact was constrained by relatively little project resources in light of the institutional complexity of the High School.

Review of the intervention and of the findings of the assessment reported here suggest at least two things with respect to institutionalization of project efforts. First, the High School Reading teacher might work directly with content area teachers, modeling teaching behaviors, providing consultant assistance, and developing and disseminating instructional materials. Secondly, the Reading teacher might work indirectly with identified students by organizing, monitoring and assessing a tutorial program which could utilize other High School students who would be effective language role models for thier less capable peers.

ATTACHMENT

Table 1. Summary of Student Feedback

	N
1. The things which the tutor asked me to do _____.	
were too hard	0
made me think	27
were too easy	1
2. Getting the chance to receive extra help from the tutor was _____.	
helpful	24
okay	1
not helpful	1
	NR=2
3. The tutor got me to work _____ my regular teacher does.	
harder than	16
about the same as	10
less than	2
4. I found it _____ to ask the tutor for help with particular problems.	
very hard	0
somewhat hard	3
very easy	24
	NR=1
5. The answers the tutor gave my questions were usually _____.	
helpful	17
okay	9
confusing	2
6. The tutor made my work _____ interesting.	
very	14
a little	12
not	2
7. The assignments the tutor gave me were _____ helpful.	
very	22
a little	4
not	1
	NR=1
8. As a result of working with the tutor, I learned _____ more than before.	
a lot	17
a little	10
nothing	1

9. I thought the things the tutor taught me were _____ worthwhile.

very	17
somewhat	10
not	1

10. I liked working with my tutor _____.

a lot	23
a little	3
not at all	1
	NR=1

11. I think the other students in my group liked working with my tutor _____.

a lot	14
a little	11
not at all	1
	NR=2

12. I am _____ interested in continuing to receive special help of the kind I have been getting in these last few weeks.

very	20
kind of	7
not	1

Table 2. Springfield High School Teacher Feedback (N=6)

Item	N
1. The things which the intern asked my students to do were _____.	
too difficult	0
challenging	5
too easy	0
cannot respond	1
2. The way the intern organized things was _____.	
too structured	0
okay	5
too loose	0
cannot respond	1
3. The directions the intern gave students were usually _____.	
unclear/confusing	0
okay	3
nonexistent	0
cannot respond	3
4. Getting the chance with the intern to discuss things in greater detail than possible in my regular class was _____ for the students.	
helpful	5
okay	0
not helpful	0
cannot respond	1
5. The intern got my students to work _____ I usually am able to do.	
harder than	2
about the same as	2
less than	0
cannot respond	2
6. Students found it _____ to ask the tutor for help with particular problems.	
very difficult	0
somewhat difficult	0
very easy	4
cannot respond	2
7. The answers the intern gave to students' questions were usually _____.	
confusing	0
okay	4
nonexistent	0
cannot respond	2
8. Students thought that the things the interns taught them were _____ worthwhile.	
very	3
somewhat	2
not	0
cannot respond	1
9. Students liked working with the intern _____.	
very much	5
somewhat	1
not at all	0
cannot respond	0
10. Students are _____ interested in continuing to receive special tutoring of the kind they have been getting in these last few weeks.	
very	4
somewhat	0
not	0
cannot respond	2

Item	N
11. Since my student(s) worked with the intern the classwork has _____.	
improved	5
remained the same	0
deteriorated	0
cannot respond	1
12. My students show _____ interest in their school work after working with the interns.	
a greater	4
the same amount of	2
a lesser	0
cannot respond	0
13. The intern has made himself/herself available, upon request, for conferences.	
frequently	6
infrequently	0
never	0
cannot respond	0
14. The intern has _____ followed through on a mutually agreed upon plan of action.	
always	5
frequently	1
never	0
cannot respond	0
15. The intern has _____ planned classroom activities, materials, and/or methods appropriate for the current level of competence of the students.	
frequently	5
infrequently	1
never	0
cannot respond	0

Item	N
16. The intern has used _____ special learning activities with the students.	
a variety of	6
few	0
no	0
cannot respond	0
17. I _____ be interested in continuing or building upon the materials, lessons, or activities prepared by the intern.	
would	6
may	0
would not	0
cannot respond	0
18. I have received _____ feedback from the intern covering my students.	
helpful	4
adequate	2
inadequate	0
cannot respond	0

Most Important Gains

Some positive experience with American History. The individual attention.

A sense of accomplishment.

Self confidence in knowing that they can be successful in areas in which they were previously failing.

Proper study skills - at least they were given a base to work from.

A better self image and a competent feeling of the subject. They recognize the work required is possible to accomplish through concentrated effort.

Very successful!

Additional Comments

The intern's student evaluations were most helpful. They gave me added insight into the students' difficulties. I found these evaluations to be the best part of the program for me.

Denise has been a tremendous help to me! I hate to loose her!!

My students were always anxious to work with the intern. I realize a few of them took advantage of the situation of "getting out of class" but Lynn was aware of their behavior and always had them under control. Because of her, I got work from students I might otherwise not have seen. She was extremely helpful in their learning.

Table 3. Intern Feedback (N=3)

Major Contributions to High School

Due to the small number of teachers we worked with I don't feel we had much of an impact on the High School. We did have an impact on a small number of students and, in turn, reached their teachers through them. The only real contribution I see was the two day "Reading in the Content Areas" Inservice.

I feel that the work I did with my students was quite successful and this can be seen in their grades. As for effecting the entire school, I don't feel it was accomplished since we were not able to get in contact with as many of the students as we had initially hoped.

The major contribution I felt was the effect we had on the students. We showed concern for them, showed them some skills that may help them achieve better in their classes, and helped them with assignments. We also made teachers aware of some of the students' problems. We showed teachers some different approaches that may help their students.

Most Important Lessons Learned

Discipline is a very important part of the function of a High School. High School students are just as cooperative as elementary students. High School staffs are very fragmented as a whole and in each department.

I found out that it is hard to motivate students when they have had a bad attitude towards school most of their lives. By the time they get to high school, they are very set in their ways and their manner of thinking. I wish they could all be turned on to the "neat things" schools could give them.

The High School is very departmental. There are many teachers/departments, using many different techniques to accomplish the same goals. Cooperation is a must by all involved.

Suggested Modifications for Tutoring Program

I feel the most important factor in making tutoring effective is that the students want the help. I felt the students who were being tutored on a volunteer basis were more cooperative than the students who were assigned by the teachers.

It could be better if:

1. The whole program were set up earlier in the year instead of after the four or so weeks it took to get it really rolling.
2. We were able to work with more of the teachers and have some impact on them.
3. We could have worked with students who were a little more "into" school and not so disgusted with it, wanting to quit!

The program could be improved through:

1. Better communication among all involved.
2. Expectations of teacher being better known.
3. Knowledge of material covered and assignments were understood by all.
4. Separate facilities provided for each group and less interruptions.
5. More students involved.